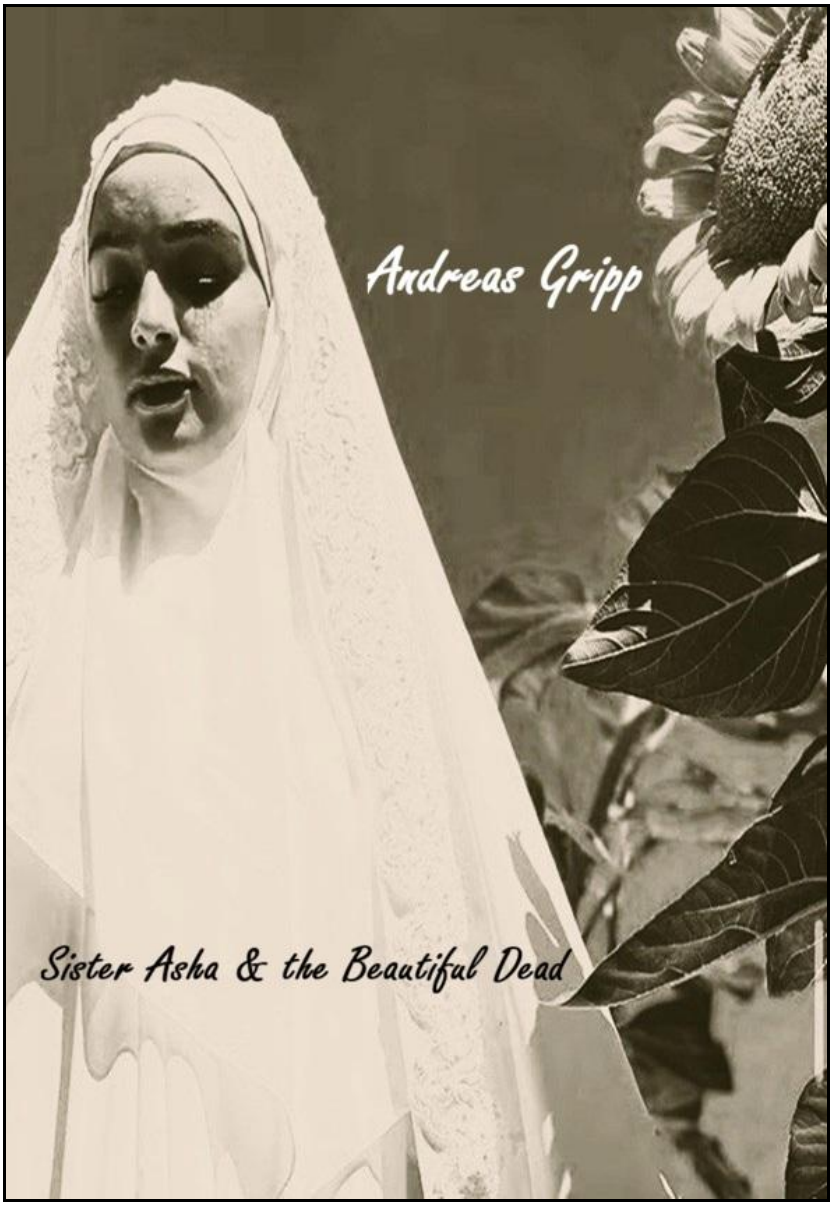
Andreas Gripp
Sister Asha & the Beautiful Dead

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Sister Asha & the Beautiful Dead

Andreas Gripp

Beliveau Books

Sister Asha & the Beautiful Dead
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All of these poems were composed in 2026

Grief, I've learned, is really just love.
It's all the love you want to give, but cannot.

—Jamie Anderson

Children at Play

We've driven down
this street for seven
ages & haven't seen them.
A diamond
sign that lies. Or maybe
out-of-date by
a country mile.

Kids on Phones would be
more apropos—
hinting we should
creep at a loris'
pace—they'll never
see us coming
thanks to Apple.

I'm Methuselah-
enough to think
of *Beatles.* Or maybe
Eden's garden,
a sluggish serpent/snake.

They'll step in
front of our Audi—

every gaze is
drooped—like flowers
in the crack of
pavement where
the rain has failed to reach.

And such are *they*—
missing the gift of
water all around them—
a creamy May
magnolia, drops of dew
on webs,
burnets bobbed in air—
like boats
against a billow—
clouds in a three-
legged dash.

Eyes of four are
needed in this era—
two to see us coming—
winking to acknowledge—

and a pair to see how
Amber Dawn is garbed on
Instagram—shorts pulled
to her hips, too *soon*
to boast of thighs,

& LaMarcus on his skateboard
in a tumble—headfirst
in the roses
that he never knew were there,
the scrape of thorns to
scream he's still alive,

like we whenever
the cat has had
enough of our inertia on
the couch, our gaping through a
glass that's not the
window we haven't wiped in
20 years.

The Gardener

The neighbour calls
me Black Thumb.
If you saw my drooping
zinnias
you'd know why.

She's never known
carnations to go *charcoal*
after rain. I call my roses
thorns because that's all
they really are. Miracle-Gro's
a charlatan with a ferret
beneath his hat. He might
as well be a mortician.

The vines upon the bricks
are pretzeled bones—
they've never held a leaf in
all their life. No one mistakes
my Ivy for Cambridge U.
Everything reeks of death.
Even the rats have fled.

Begonias beg for
water. I flood them like some
raging, Noachian God.
The marigolds would settle
for *yellow.* They're butter
that's spent a month in the
Mojave.

The foxglove is a mitten
on a shrew. The fungi
stay away. They know to
cross my fence is
suicide. Mushrooms
aren't worth it.

The irises are blind.
Sunflowers have no petals—
and no one's been around
for *loves-me-not.*

In fact, *no one* ever visits
and I don't blame them.

The spiders spin no webs.
Each skunk has held
its nose. If my garden were a
costume, it'd be a graveyard on
the skirts of San Antone.

My bluebells
are kazoos in
shades of pall. The Loti
have been shunned by
Bodhisattvas—the frogs
are wilted prunes.

Nellie's Nursery
bolts their doors
whenever they see me coming.
The junipers
duck in droves. The Ferns
hide all their fingers.

Every living plant?
Deems me *Thanatos.*
Except the dandelions.

I've learned to leave
them be—lest they become
some haggard kittens,
their ashen teeth

detached from rotted gums,
carried in the current
like a jailbreak, hearing
Iqaluit's pretty green
this time of year.

Patchwork

You're averse to eating
tuna. Calling it "Frankenfish."
There's a dozen different ones
in your stinky tin. Fins
inauspiciously
flaked past recognition.

My *StarKist* has been
opened with the
teeth of an electric
jaw—efficient as a table
saw, a lid that hangs by
a strand, as a cuspid
that is loose in second grade,
your rocking it back &
forth like grandma's chair—
the one in which she knit—
until it drops in your
anxious palm.

Your father
lost four fingers
to a *Rockwell*—

its wheel
you always feared and
with good reason.
You *still* envisage them—
there on the workshop
floor, gasping like sardines
upon the deck. Suffocation
isn't so bad when you really
ponder:
no blood or mutilation—
leaving a lovely cadaver.
But maybe *lunch*
is not the moment
for morbidity.

What you *will* say is
my mayo won't fix a thing.
That basil's for the birds.
Nothing will ever
save my *poor man's turkey.*

I recall the Harris Tories—
telling those of us on welfare
to *haggle* over dented
cans—

while *they* of course
ate sturgeon, legs of crusted
crab—suggesting that we serve it
with a side of no-name chips,
like *pickle & cherry* flavour.
If *I* made something ghastly,
I'd stay anonymous too.

You drown your mac 'n' cheese,
with ketchup from *Dollar Tree.*
There are 25 tomatoes in a
bottle, yet *that* doesn't bother you at
all. You mumble that *it's different*
through the mush of your
concoction:
Veggies are supposed
to merge—just like the cosmic Om.

I'll wait until you're finished
to speak of *fruit.* That carrots
are never plucked from pendent
vines. Ditto *artichoke.*
Who'd *eat* such a thing, anyway?

I imagine an
obstruction in my pipes—a gag
then loss of air—from this
maligned, misunderstood monster;

people gathered in its
garden by the pond; torches
in their fists, pitchforks
by which to pierce its
quilted flesh.

What Settles

The sun has gone on
strike. Luna will not cross
the picket line. The stars
have birthed a wildcat
constellation. Blue &
white no longer
waltz aloft.

The kites are full of
soot. Verdancy
is pewter never
scoured. Even the fish are
foul. Everything is fume.

The runner on third
is home. Dug into
her basement with
the fetid. The clematis
has been climbing
in reverse, slumming
with the moles &
our decay.

Someday in the stratum,
they'll wonder what we
were. The reasons why we
smoked the land
which fed us. The blur of
dawn & dusk. Choking
every warbler that could
simply soar no higher.

Why stand with stretching
fingers to this vault
of amber-ash? Who do you think
is there, eager to pull you
up into Valhalla, teach
you how to breathe
without the air?

Sister Asha

has not been naked
since her birth.
That's not to say
she bathes in her
chador. But the bubbles
are a screen of
air & water.
And they alone
are worthy. From such
we're gifted life.

That's not to
say a zephyr
hasn't whiffed
her tawny skin.
That the moth
has never ventured
to her breasts.
For this is why
they rest in
white apparel.

A nun from
down the road
will pass her by. Glossed
in an obsidian
sentry. Slowly going
umber from the sun.
Says *Christ*
is not Allah's.

Both will dream
of doves.
Both will tread in
glory. For the earth
will preserve their
bones. And nothing's
as resplendent as
the perished. For where
is our partition
not of flesh?

Reveal which skull has
cursed you.
The hand which
casted cobble.

The orbs that
looked away
when you approached,
forging the
phantom flight of
a mourning plume.

Capitalism

It's essentially cleaner to be
corrupt and rich than it is
to be innocent and poor.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald,
This Side of Paradise

Poverty is an
entirely human thing.
Aardvarks have
no ghettos. Foxes
wear no rags.
A den is a den is a den.
Being a realtor
would be murder.

The cheetah doesn't
need a Lamborghini.
The porcupines
have balked at private
jets. Their needles
are enough. One might even
play a Brahms concerto.
My stylus has a fracture
and I've nothing but
the sparrows for my tunes.

Tell me of a whale
who's unemployed. Food
stamps for the snails.
None of them lack a
home in which to dwell.
And somehow we're
supreme.

Ostriches? Content
with what they have.
The ground above
their gaze. We assume that
they're ashamed, or
feigning *all is well.*
They simply see the
worth of what we won't.

And then the scorpion—
who knows the shoreline
doesn't need a
gauche cabana. Show me one
with *fingers to the bone,* their
knees disfigured spuds,

from scrubbing a
filthy stairwell of its grime,

her brood of famished
kids in some favella,
no Adidas
for plumping feet,
onesies that will fit them
head-to-tail,

which sting you like
the dickens down
in Rio, you in a hammock's
sway, a straw in your batida,
as though there's no one
who's been wailing
beneath your soles.

The Leaf Blower

Bro has got
his blower out
again. It rages
like a Harley a
mote away. I wager that
he waits until
I've tallied the final
ewe

before he's revving up
his demon once again.

5:55
a.m. is no man's land.
The night
begets its slumber.
The dawn
before its yawn
to cue its shift.
Calm's unwritten
law & understanding.

He'll do *anything* to
breed my aggravation.
Envisages the
clenching of my
teeth & promptly chuckles.
My dental bill's been
doubled since he moved into
his hovel next to mine.
I can hardly
wait till winter when
he's mulching half a nano-
gram of snow—showing
off his raucous
Toro Max.

I will pay him
back some day.
Find out if he
listens to Zamfir.
Blast my AC/DC
in his direction—shatter
his fucking pan flute
like it's glass.

His *socks* will step on
splinters, the ones he buys in
bulk from Dollar Tree.
He'll rue the day
he cheaped on plastic
muffs. Hell will toll its bells.
A cacophony
that will haunt him
while he's googling for
the nearest mausoleum,
as if its walls
are never thumped on from
within, as if the corpses are
reposed in contemplation,
blissed by a
slinking mouse who's
just a whisker from
their drawers.

The Hero

No one's ever
wrote about a
grape that saves the world.
Sure, in the form of
pinot noir it brings me
joy. Though this
will hardly suffice.

Due to Jesus'
Thursday lamb, it's gifted
us with *chalice, in memory,*
shed for you. Carrots
couldn't cut it.

It's adept to
gag a villain if
it ever comes to that—
kerplunking down
a gullet. Bond has
turned his nose
and stuck to bullets.

A bunch is Russian
Roulette. Which is seeded?
Which is not? Which is sweet
or tart?

Mother said if
I swallowed a Muscat's
pip, I'd have fruit inside
my stomach for the
rest of my life.
Such is a branch's
clout. Watch it lead the way
& scale the stars.

Grapes have birthed
their reign from leafed
adherence. The turn &
twist of twigs. Confluent
little creeks. Cleaving little
comrades. All for all
& one for one. Now I finally
get it. Love is the vigour
to hold.

Even tempests
need the time to
catch their breath. It is then
that we shall revel.

We've never tried to
toast in September
gales.

I think my
Reverend drinks
and I don't blame her.
Says Christ
depicts a *vine*
and not a gun.
Green & garnet
globes out in the
yonder. Barrels grace
with age. Pregnant
with salvation.

MAGA troll
her daily. The Bishop
cups his ears. He chucked
his cassock once
in a fit of nerves. Reminded
him of blood. A cape without
a sky
and none to beckon.

The Phobia, or Channeling
Orville Redenbacher—with cheese

Willard, there are rats in the basement
—1971

Ben, most people would turn you away
I don't listen to a word they say
They don't know you as I do
—Michael Jackson

There is no fear in love
—1 John 4:18

Mice are always
cuter *out*-of-doors.
The way they squeak
& squirm has always
given me the willies.

Why I'm watching *Willard*
I do not know. But Ben &
friends have shown me that
these rats would be much worse.
They'll chew you to the marrow—

your wires in the wall as though
it's licorice.
Ditto for the *Wiley Wallaby*
in your engine—your Mustang '72.

They're piranhas
who've learned to crawl, claws
in place of fins. Unlike *squirrels*

they've absconded our endearment;
eschewed a fuzz-on-tails
which may have saved.

Teach me about the
line of love & hate.
Narrow like a whisker.
The space
between each tooth.

Love is a bath of water for
the birds. Leaving it in the
night since it's the *bats*
who lap it up. Their wings
like fallen angels—

the flip-
side of the finch. A rat in
hellish flight.

But maybe it's the *sky*
who knows them best.
It's why we lift
our visage to the stars.
Why we think of heaven
in the plumes. You surely
didn't think it
out of fright?

Not *theirs—mine* when I hear a
scratching in the gypsum,
never considering a drywall's
simple itch, or the ghosts are
now so lonely they'll
speak in the only
wretched language they have left.

Memory

There are days
I confuse *Parkinson's*
with *Alzheimer's.*
Maybe I've been
coming down with
both. Tremulous
à la San
Andreas. Amnesic
like a dissipated answer—
the dousing of its candle;
wisps that up & frizzle
to the ceiling, evanesce

to merge with wafting clouds.

There are days I
mix up *lupus*
with *arthritis.*
Either way I
cannot climb the steps.
You spoke to me of
wolves & full-moon
fever. It's *lupine* I recall—
you giggled *lunacy.*
I thought it just in jest.

The days will come
when I'll muddle *love*
with *cancer.*
Will heave you in my
arms which throb from
fibro—the jack-of-all-conditions—
neuropathy's poorer
cousin, place you in the
loo so you can purge
yourself of chemo's
supposed cure. I'll cup my
ears at the bruit of violent
retching, limber up
to bring you back to
bed, place you under quilts
I'll feign bring comfort.

What's it called
when heat & cold are felt
in the very same instant?
When you sense you are
aflame in ambered ice?
When you race at the speed of
sight while lying still,

knowing diapers will be
bookends to your most-
belovèd's life? Aging in
reverse would make no
difference, helpless to utter
a word on both your
last day & your first, the one who
wipes your drool you're
unable to name.

The Wall, or
A Humdrum Lesson in Cacti

You've one-upped
my joke on
boredom. And now my *smirk*
has been *exfoliated*
from my face.

Sure, you'd rather watch the
paint—not to *dry*

but to chip and
spall then plummet—
like a corn flake
to a bowl.

We agree it was
the dullest cereal around
back in the day.
Cheap because we
snoozed right through
our breakfast—while our dad
was docked an hour
for being late.

Grass will grow
a *snippet* every morning.
And the swallows
swoop to visit.

Glidden? It takes its
time to reach
aridity—but the worst is even
better—they've made it
too damn good.
Lasts a quarter-
century—the listless
clerk will tell us. But
that's merely its
genesis:

for your science friend has prattled
it takes seven million
years to complete the receding
it undertakes. That's at least three-plus
trillion yawns. Longer than
glacial melt. Slower than parting
plates.

The ennui you're ducking out of?
Could hardly be as bad as
that: Grandma's clock that
grates with every tic.
Uncle mumbling
the stocks from '92.
The neighbour
sighing *yep* upon the couch
that has no pattern.

And you with the family
Vulgate, perusing the Book of
Numbers, while *Newman's*
Calculus awaits in
the batter's box, your sweat
like a seeping
saguaro in endless
sand. And it's *this,* you'll boast,
that's funny. So goddamn,
motherfucking funny.

The Sensei

When you're a
poet, you never know
which strophe will be your last.
It could've been *this*—
had that stroke I've
always dreaded
slapped me silly.

They say you *slur*
your final words
when it has hit you:
see shells shesells up
by the shesore.
I practice it again &
again. Failing to
pivot my cheek.

Your body dies a minute
before your brain. What to think
those final sixty
seconds—and how do you
tabulate time? By the scansion
of the lines?

No one's ever scribed
a true haiku. That
much I know. If I had
an instant left, I wouldn't
say a peep about a
frog. Seriously—
you're gonna squander
that waning moment
on some leap among the lilies?
Describe its flunking plop?
Then you wonder why
they never speak of Bashō
anymore. Exhaling his
closing breath, carbon
more important than a
tercet. The ripple on
the pond
is the pond.

My child
soaks her feet
among the tadpoles.
Doesn't wince in
mud & slime.

Sees a wart as
as a bulge of beauty.

She has nothing
left to learn.

Enigma

I gift you
a book of crosswords—
with all of the answers
filled by a fountain
pen.

You deride me for
frugality, for the gall
of the Sally Ann,
the time
I gave a jigsaw,
bereft of its final piece.
You spent ninety
days for naught;
a fossil
in the stratum
sans a bone.

But please don't
misconstrue—they're simply not
the same. Cogitate
the squares—*blacked out* like
the houses in the blitz,

unwilling to yield what's
hid, a mother &
her bairns
behind a curtain;

a doctor sawing an
arm replete with
shrapnel, a dog
beside the bed
in spite of germs;
or a pair of smitten
teens, their faith that

the *unsaid* will
never divulge
his darkest secrets,
regardless how he's held
beneath the lamp,
hanging by his ankles
on a hook, mum on
where is love
and where she's not,
the blueprint of her
lair, the letters of her
sacred nom de guerre.

That Final Christmas Eve

The bulb is older than
I am. A reminisce
of mother. The time she
led me out in shedding
snow. *Santa Clause*
has dandruff. He needs a
place to wash his
head & beard. We laboured
for an hour, the Inuit
had nothing to fear. It was
in essence *ice*
& little *castle.*
The shine of her
balmy glow, scouting
for a manger
once I slept.

The Moth, or Channelling Chic Young

Nothing long-suffers
like love. Always coming
back despite her woe.
Stuffing her duffel
bag, stomping
out the door she'll thud
behind her, loosed
from rusty hinges, while she
swears she's had enough.

She'll catch a
city bus outside its
route, reserved for the un-
consoled, one that does no
favours—not for you nor
Dagwood Bumstead:

face half-shaved with
foam, untied tie a motley
anaconda—laces like
some larvae yet to kiss, jouncing
in their failure to be fastened,
take to the sky when
called for,

and you like him
the boy who's late for
school, dropping his
lunch & bucket to
the ground, flailing his frantic
arms to *stop & pity—*
tomorrow he'll be on time—
vowing to love her better
though he won't.

Despite it
she'll acquiesce:
a postcard from
the beach in Monte
Carlo, tan lines like
the cusp of sun & cloud,
the dappled dawn of
mocha, scrawling
she misses you, all has
been forgiven,
sand wedged in
her fingers like the
grit between her toes
that's yet to fall.

The Reason I'll Never Read This Aloud

Live is a peculiar
fellow. When you meet
it for the first time,
you're unsure if it's Livv or
Lyve—like bumping into
Job at the liquor store,
uncertain if he's
probing for employment

or is drinking because he's
swathed in sores & boils. I know
I cannot blame him. Alas,
I have digressed.

It makes it hard for
a *listener* of this poem—
hence I'll refuse
to read it in public.
Of course, *read* is
a whole new bag
of worms. Reed or Red.
Damn it I hate
English. Even whole & hole
bring misery. I should've
used *can,* but it sits there
indistinct—

ability or a tin
of barfaroni.

So please understand,
dear Jesús in the very
back row, closest
to the door, whose name I
loused at the intro, I hurt my
back in a canoe and can't
convey it. I'll return in half-
a-jiffy with the paddle
as a prop, ask you to move
to the front and talk
of accents, whack you on
the ass to start a good ol'
donnybrook, an old-fashioned
raow

we said back in the day,
when we knew what
everyone meant,
or shrugged it made no
difference, content
to not be dead.

Carnivore, or Nagasaki, Mon Amour

There is no lotus
without the mud
—Thich Nhat Hanh

I never asked you
for a flower. I prefer
my floorboards
clean. Who's to spout
what is and isn't
worth it? Spare me all
your Mahayana
prattle.

There cannot
be redemption
without the blood.
Now is not the
moment to be queasy.
Am I spared
your skyward rapture
if I confess my
fear of flight? I'd make a
lousy eagle. Hiding in the
bushes with my
baldness.

There's no living
without a pogrom.
Tell me of Treblinka,
the measuring
of skulls, books &
bodies burning in
a pillar, as if the smoke
cannot ascend
without the fire.
Infernos can only
consume
what once had breath.

There's no poem
without the stone
in Yucatan. Tell me
how you'd dodge
Dakotaraptor, groceries
in your arms, messing
up your Converse
in the mire,
berated by your wife
for leaky eggs.

Our son is ever-
curious, asking if Godzilla
would exist
if not for *Fat Man.*
Not Toho's green
behemoth—the *guy* in the
rubber suit, bowing to Hirohito
in its stead, hearing that
he's soiled the rug again;
that he's footing
the bill himself, and if it
happens one more time

he'll learn what
being barefoot
really means, dashing
his heel on rocks
like some beguiled
Son of God, knowing rain
would not be rain
if not for drought, wings are
only wings
because a colossus
wouldn't slow its
ruthless chase.

The First Time

There's a moment
when you're grieving
you forget.

It's the quarter-
second glint

when you peek up at
the solstice; your first
banana sundae
since it happened. The
stain that's on your T-
shirt once you're home—
it hadn't been washed
since …

You'll catch
yourself in chuckles
from the sitcom in her
cache—
this isn't the time for Netflix—
that pang of guilt
that judges with its wig:

how dare you play
at happy.

The first time you'll
awake it's
slipped your mind—
albeit for a splinter of
a breath. *Today we're—*

The first dream's worst of
all. Your belovèd
lives & waits
upon a bench
down by the brook. The apogee of
hair still there.
Every wing of
bird is lingering
with her. You have to recall the
one that is her namesake:

the lark we christened Barbra.

You remember she dropped the
e—between the 2nd
b & r. *It never makes a sound*
so what's the point?

What you *can't* elicit—even by a
welling in the iris—
is *how* it takes to heaven—

the instant twigs
beneath your shoe are
cracked in two.

This is a poem of bones
and not of beauty.
How brittle they become
once the marrow's
been usurped. A snap
that's not forsaken
despite the volume set
to max on her favourite
song. You put *one* foot past
the other but not in
dance. For how can you
think to frolic? You're
only wiping dishes—the plate on
which she slurped her
final crumbs, while you stood
amid the gloam & feigned a smile.

The Weather Guy's a Liar

"Partly cloudy"
doesn't cut it.
The sky is in one hundred
thousand moods.
Saying it needs *Zyprexa*
would be meiosis.
Everything's understated.
It's pouring pups &
kittens when it's not.
More like wolves & seals.

Have you ever
heard its bark? Not the dog
I mean the seal—
underneath the Big
Top when the circus still
had creatures great &
small. Big is never
massive in Manhattan.
We'd look like Lilliputians in
London Town. Of course the one in
Kentucky. Its festival honours
the life of Colonel
Sanders. How he made it
past a corporal
I'll never know.

Raining
down the secrets
which are eleven
spices strong.

I've forgotten about the
bark. Sounds like
whooping cough.
Watch me pour some
Buckley's against a
tree. Of course it's under
the weather—who isn't?
Waving its fecund fingers
in the gale. Thunder's a
shocking way to
say *hello.* Talk about over the
top.

As for me, I'll be drenched
the very moment
that I furl in my umbrella
like a sail. Mischievous
miasmic cloud,

a boy who dams the
hose out in
the garden, releases his
pinching vise-grip
while you gaze into
its chasm
like there's nothing that
is coming down the pipe,

a rumble to mimic
hunger, or a thirst that's
always teased and
seldom quenched.

Liebestraum, or If Babar was a Bard

If elephants were as smart as
you maintain, they'd have authored
poetry.

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson
wrote they weep. Grieve a death
as much as we. If so,
where are the poignant
elegies for their forebears?
Where are their lamentations
à la Job & Jeremiah?

I've witnessed the curl of
trunks, a nose up like a cobra
poised to strike—
but innocuous in its stead,
sloshing all the children
not with venom,
but the spray of a water
gun. They're capable having
fun, and a memory second to
none. But none of this is poetry.

It's not like they're lacking
fodder for a verse. They'll
leap like a pogo stick—
whenever there's a mouse.
Failing to take to the
sky with their mammoth ears—
Dumbo be damned for his lies.

Well before the donkeys
interloped,
we'd pin *tails* on
pachyderms.
Imagine being supplanted
by a jackass.
They know so much of
hardship—yet where is the
sombre ode
bereaving tusks?
Ivory raped for Liszt's
piano nocturne?

The elephant's call is brass.
It is *they* who inspired the
trumpet. The thunder of their
steps a booming drum.

I know if *I* lost all the kudos
I'd scrawl a poem.

If they were as wise as
Masson claims, a part of the
brain would not be *hippo-*
campus—for their rival at
the muddy saloon.
They'd have at least
put out a chapbook. Yet there isn't
even a meagre
limerick, as if a shimmer
from their tear ducts
says it all.

Symphony in A-flat major

I've tired of saying
it twice. It's diluted the
gong of *love.*

My uncle stuffed
his ears with cotton
balls. Not to quiet the Earth
but to bear in mind
the labour of those
enchained. He deemed it
reparation. Organized *3-on-3*
at Jane & Finch.

Your ex had mumbled *stay*
& it blew the game.
Like Dylan
with *dubble bubble*
in his mouth. Pops
as soon as you gesture for
attention. Like the stone you've
skipped along the
stagnant pond. The rest of us
enamoured with the swans.

There's an eccentric
kind of quiet
when the lawyer signs
divorce—listening for a *wait*
and like Godot it never comes;
he stutters *Beethoven*
would've traded with
Van Gogh; the ear untimely
sundered noting the swell
of a semibreve—
one he'd been so deaf to
'fore the end—like we whenever

sucklings in the shanties
bawl for milk;
the squeals from the
abattoir; feigning we don't know
French;

and the boy who's called a
faggot for his skipping in a skirt
& pink barrettes,

bouncing like a Wilson
cast aside. Get wind of the
percussion
of her soles—there upon the
asphalt, cratered like a
face from years of
acne—we'd never call it
music but it is.

Hear it in Ludwig's *10th*—
the scherzo he failed to finish.
We would have stood in awe,
the plunking of our jaws.
Such is the way of the world.
Such is the way of the world.

The Catalyst, or
Why I was booted from Poetics 101

Please—no more
poetry prompts.
They're living with
the larks in la-la land.
None which light a
bulb for what's been lost.

Write about
your very first camping
trip. Sure, I'll scrawl about
the tents in فلسطين.
Ones with scourge & rats.
Cute as a whisker's twitch.
Torn just like a kite
that's clawed by
osprey. Mine got stuck in
oaks like Charlie Brown's.
Epitomize your childhood—
a single, joyous
image will suffice.

What are the names
the animals call themselves?

Does a chicken
know it's *chicken?*
I'm not talking
cowardice. If you were
wedged in cages, the imprint of
the grilles upon your down, nesting
in your dung, you'd be more than a
little uneased. Strung downside-
up like Spanish Inquisitions.
What sin is there in feathers—
the lay of morning eggs?
Yolks are but our
star as metaphor.
Tell me about the light.
What impetus
for eyes that bleed in
dusk—I hear it's deemed Ebola.
Red as your favourite colour.
The muse for over 40
years in prison just
for pot? Just for breathing Black?
A bed without a blanket.

Fuck right off with your spark
to *write of grass.*
I see horses that should've
been; trees that would've
been—if not for inspiration—
it's mine / run like the dickens /
how I'd spend
a billion dollars.
I picture Warren Buffet
with a parrot on his head—
there at the all-you-can-eat.
Jimmy! I told you to write of Jimmy!

Everything's didactic
in the end. A pen is not a pulpit
yet it is. *Say it without you*
saying it. I did. That's why every
page is barren. *Vacancy.* The motel
at the side of the road.
I know that someone's there—
lilting like the arm of metronome.

Room 13. Second one from
the end. Knock as loud as you can.
It's possible that the
housemaid's there & fainted.
What is the nature of sleep?

Note:

The Arabic name for Palestine is Filasṭīn
(pronounced fah-leh-steen),
written as فلسطين in Arabic script.

Sin, or Thoughts from a Gravel Road

Stones have spoke of
Judgement
for millennia.
I don't mean the
little ones

you toss into the pond
to hear *kerplunk,*
hoping to startle a
toad to leap
mid-air.

Or those you'll cram by
twos into your pocket,
competing with
your keys for
dandling touch,
as if feigning they
can open any door.

Stephen knew them well—jagged
asteroids—in the fists of *righteousness;*
the bill for *blasphemy;* levy for ever-loving
whom you will—

whether the Christ or
whether the Kevin who lives
next door when you're a man.

An *adulteress*
was spared their jutting
wrath: *Let he who is*
without …

Intifada
started with a
clutch & skyward
fling. What is this *peculiar* liberation—
from the palms of
shellshocked babes?
Everything's a rock
that final day.

The boy in the
balloon? Will rise up
to his rapture—
once his stone
is finally heaved
out from his basket—

a sister plodding
barefoot
on the pebbles
far below, knowing the way
they pierce her soles
will sting forever,
bleed with her redemption,

succumbing not to
potholes of the street, their lips
which crack a grin,
open like a draw-
bridge set to gorge
on heel & wheel, its mouth
that's taunted *hell's*
the toll for heaven,
the detour in
the detour
you thought you'd
somehow circumvent
when you were young,

when belts to
welt your flesh had
hung from hooks
once lifting hardhats
above the earth.

Geometry

is pointless. Spare me all
the tales of your precision—
either type of compass
is in err. There's always
someone drafting
swollen circles, someone there to
offer wayward routes.

Why are *both* poles swamped in
ice? The extremes of
north & south
like Left & Right—
either one is fascist
when it's drastic.
Lines that hug & kiss
on the ellipse.

Straight is no straighter than
gay. Even in the rainbow
it's a beeline—every hive
a spectrum taking
flight.

What we call red is
green. Try it out
in traffic. There is
no vice in versa. Think outside
of sand. A backhoe
claws the blue
empyrean.

Pisa's spiralled stairs?
The quintessential
Euclidean
thought. A helix
shies away from
tapered arrows—
a snake who's forever
known that it's
the *rest* of Earth in
slant, sotted like an
alley filled with gin,
every brick a dungeon,
a Garden going *this* way,
Knowledge going *that.*

Losing the Muse

When the final pinion's
flown, of what will minstrels
scribble? Huddled beneath the
last arboreal, not a single
leaf to rake, no water left
to water. Roots like bloodless
veins.

When no one's plunged
in love, where will be the
verse of veneration? We'll
crave forlorn clichés.

Where are poems of nectar
after the drone of bees
are stilled? The keeling
strophe that's void of
any blossom?
We should've been
swaddling weeds—
they were flowers &
we failed to see it.

The stars are
snuffed by smoke.
The moon a bloomless
tomb. None to croon
its craters can allure.
Its scars are
our redemption. It took a
jagged pounding
in our place. Nothing speaks of
grace like sacrifice.

The sun will scorch
to cinders. Kernels
snubbed as chaff. We've
no more quills to scrawl it—
remember? Digested in the
embers. *Pens* that gulls
bestowed; we couldn't be
bothered to thank them.
Pests upon the beach.

The lingering nests
have toppled and
the eggs lapped up by flies.

Theirs are the only
wings that horrid
morning.

They've licked the dung of
dogs, then darted to our
salads while we're dining.
Only bards can sense
such splendour. Stung with
so much sage that
even whiskey can't assuage
its scalding truth.

The Neophyte

With my every endeavour
you will comment
baby steps. It's irksome
beyond conviction.

I attempt to master
French,
you blurt out *baby steps.*
Rest assured, *pas de bébé*
will be the words I learn
from rote.

Elsewhere it's Italian,
birthing spaghettini
from the scratch of
semolina. I serve it
past the semblance
of *al dente,* and although you up
my age—*povero bambino*—
the condescension lingers
like Romano. There's enough
on my plate already
en Français.

I *spit* the flesh of
melon but not the seeds—
you chuckle *baby steps.*
Stick a soother
in my pout and
watch me seethe.
I'll build a beanstalk
to the nimbi
if given time.
Jacques will have no
victoire over me.

I'll do 50 reps of
push-ups for my climb.
Every squat a toddler's
clumsy stride.
I'll be so ripped
my face will be on
Gerber's. I'll eat nothing
but carrot mush.
And then when
I'm big & burly,

I'll be beseeched
to land on Mars,
be Armstrong 2.0—

and you'll still
be by my side, huddled
in the module,
the white of our clasping
knuckles tints of moon,
egging me on to take that
maiden leap—like a marionette
who's snipped its tethered
strings—discard my training
wheels, race into a sunrise with
my wondrous, googly eyes.

Be Happy, Don't Worry

It seems one & all will
scribble *of* the rain—
but not *in* the rain.

I get your ink will
smear. Paper will be
sodden like an overzealous
Scotch-Brite.
Unless your poem's called
Waterlogged,
that simply will not do.
And unless your tale
has L'Oréal—
the cliché of a runny
flume—you're better
off beneath our
gleaming star. People
are always beaming
when it's sunny.
I've yet to see a
frown within its rays.
I've yet to see a smile
in a cat & dog
deluge.

I doubt Noah's
barge of pets had
blissfully whistled to
Bobby McFerrin.

Of course, I understand
your laptop getting
soaked. The shock you'll get
when your elegy's up &
done, for the dove felled
by a flash, your hair like
Phyllis Diller's—
once you've plugged it
in the wall before it's dry,
fathoming why *those*
inside the death house
eschew electric chairs,
opt for a splash of
bullets, venom in their
veins, or kicking their feet to
swing, like a mid-air
Fred Astaire, the clouds
a pregnant matron, bawling
her water's broke.

~~No~~ Vacancy

was hewn into a bough
bereft of Spring. Every leaf
had melted.

Whatever its species
was, it hadn't
held a wren in 20
years.

Hadn't
sensed the weight
of any child.

None are left to note it.
Its eerie, toxic font.
Muse if *No* was
chiselled first, crossed-
out by the dust
on its horizon.

Road Rage, or It Happened One Night

I am a marvelous housekeeper.
Every time I leave a man
I keep his house.
—Zsa Zsa Gabor

Character is what
you are inside your
car. Forget that in-the-
dark rubbish.

It's when you're driving
solo that you'll cuss to
kingdom come. Raise a
phallic finger to the putz
who's jumping lanes as if
it's tennis; Zsa Zsa
flipping husbands
like she's Century 21;

then the Sunday morning clods
inside their putt putt, plodding to
St. Satan's
like a slug upon a sloth.
Their *honk if you love Jesus*
makes you reach for a
phantom musket.

The cops who flout
the rules are even
worse. Kings of the
Rolling Stop. Rubbing their
exemptions in your face.
They'll read your lips with
ease—as though they're
HAL 9000—
know obscenities like a
wiener knows its beans.

The clown who rides
your ass is just as grating.
His bumper mounts
your trunk as if
a hippo in his heat.
Bruh, there's kids
around.

Then the fib
from GPS,
stating your ETA is
merely an hour away—

as though there are
no potholes, the nonchalant
of reds, each one timed
to your fury, how much
you're in a hurry—
and the pedestrians
who dawdle as they
cross, fixated on their
phones, googling
Wimpy's Diner,
or maybe Shangri-la,

musing on how much
further they'll have to mosey,
thumbs up to the wind,
catch a lift
like Claudette Colbert,
skirt pulled to her
thigh, Gable left
blindsided by a
siren's ability to
pause; leave you idle
by the ditch
as if you've no place
better to be that
very minute.

L'Artista

Leonardo painted *Leda and the*
Swan to shroud a crack
along his wall that spoke of gin—
and his flailing dance which
lost control.

Michelangelo
sculpted *Bacchus*
to hide a wine stain on his rug.
He scrubbed to no avail
until the roosters
heralded the day.

And I, I will
write the Great
Canadian Epic,
10,000 pages
long, which should easily
conceal the vodka
I had vowed to never quaff.
A bookcase can be baffling.
Drink makes
deceivers of us all.

the reason my shocks cost two grand

The man who works for
the city is clearly a poet.
Watch him as he skirts the
jagged potholes on the road.
For him they are
a mimicry of moon. Craters to
fill with trope and not with tar.

Eye him as his hose
sucks all the chaff up
from the sewer—an elephant
at the edge of a
watering hole—cognizant of
predation
yet awise it needs to drink.

How can a *behemoth*
be affrighted by a mouse?
Look again—the Norway
rat laid gently on the lawn.
If *it's* unworthy of love,
then how can we tell our
children of the light?
Its big bang burst of
fervour?

This is why creation's
mostly space, he'll smugly proffer.
Where else could it catch
its wheezing breath? He'll add
we die much sooner
from our thirst than lack of food.
From the gasp of
suffocation
before our throats
declare a drought.
To asphyxiate is to
drown in gales of air.
The laying down of asphalt
is the mote in a child's eye.

You'll ask him what that means
and he'll merely shrug.
A magician never divulges
what they've learned. Neither a
would-be minstrel.
If there *are* no secrets left,
how will we ponder the
pits he's left behind?

It's how I bathe the birds
once it has rained.
Why I write of cloudburst
when it's dry.

What will you tell
the mechanic once you're there?
What you might scream is
broke she'll say is fixed.
What we call sick is healed.
We seldom see the *earth*
beneath the tarmac. Note the
writhe of life
below our white & gilded lines.

Les Royalistes

This website I've
discovered is
vastly sophisticated.

It's not imploring
me to accept
intrusive *cookies*—rather,
crème brûlée—
its outward, sugared
sheen, in touch with
its inner pudding.

Oatmeal chocolate-
chip wanted to know my
every going; who I'm
voting for; whether I've
an *innie* or an *outie.*

The crème brûlée
inquires if I've ever
studied Chaucer;
my favourite *Athenaeum;*
my opinion on
multiverse.

Cookies are
moiety at best;
a crumbling,
half-baked Mob, threatening
to *restrict*—unless I
acquiesce.

It's the kid whose fist
is clenched, demanding
your every quarter, snags
your Oreos, licks their
pearly icing—with a sneer
will hand them back.

Crème brûlée? It's always
philanthropic;
offers *seconds* with
a smile; bathes your
wanting glossa
in *ecstasy.*

And I'll give it
my very soul—without
a blink of hesitation,

capitulate every thought
I've ever had regarding
sex: call it *reproduction,*
the knowledge of
physical love,

wondering if it's time
I reappraise
the *monarchy—*
its carpet of Bordeaux,
like a tongue in flushed
surrender;
its crown of golden
brown, crisp yet supple
to the touch.

Poetic License

I respond to your dour
critique with *poetic license.*
It lets me get away
with much.

I weave my revving coupe
to the Froot Loop aisle.
Upturned avocados, the smash of
window slab,
aren't an issue with
my privilege.
Everything's a *shard*
in modern verse. See how
well I've ducked it? Like lapis
effing lazuli. What else
can a poet spout? I taped
my only *Webster's*
with Bazookas.
The gum, not the gun.
That still counts as rime.
My permit makes
me cleverer
by the 2nd.

I dabble in obfuscation.
Claiming night is a drunken
cabbage full of mites.
Though I'm supposed to speak
in *threes,* I've got nothing to
follow that up with. I'll riff
a line in Latin
about some cheese.

I rub my *sanction* in the visage
of the swine. The lot
around the cop shop
is Daytona's final lap.
My brakes screech like a
boar before the blade—
castration, circumcision,
what's the diff? It's *my* poem,
dammit. Laws of physics
need never apply.

Your eyes will melt in ice—such is the
frigidity of
your essence.

It doesn't have to make
any cents. The teller
told you nothing.
To hell with capitalism!

Whenever you spot a
typo, I'll BS like
Morissette. Bawl it's *irony.*

As for paradox
& chickens, which the other bards
flog to death,
I can do that too.
Standing on my skull
in the Aegean,
reciting Russell Edson—

who'd somehow earned the right
to say whatever the
fuck he wished—face alight like
Heston aping Moses,
all that he had blubbered
cut in clay, moulting flake by flake.

Everything is breakfast at the finish.

Eventide

The dark gets a bad rap.
Everyone fawns for the light.
Poets & the Pious are the worst—
rejoice when night is over.

Angels fall to its abyss.
Demons crawl from out.
We've been schooled to *flinch*
from its embrace.
We forgot its tender
comfort in the womb.

We pity the blind, assume
they're unable to see.
They are the first to tell you
there's nothing to fear.
Horror has usurped them
with its guile. Black is cast
as villain. Glory's always white.
Darkness tells it different.

It begets our silhouettes.
Plunges us to passion.

Note your widened
pupils, like a mouth
that's primed to kiss.
Nighttime is our Cupid
not our keeper.

It is mystery and it is knowledge.
It reveals our cosmic birth.
It sings us clemently to sleep,
shrouds us while we slumber
in the fields.

I can't even guess
how it got this way.
Our forebears
had looked *up* to midnight's
grandeur—never *down.*
It's how we behold the heavens.
Learn we're not alone.
The truth of a trillion stars.

Now our eyes are ever-
lowered to our screens—

what is it we're hoping to
find? When wonder's been
eternally aloft, stood up like
a bride amid a breeze,

longing for her belovèd
to at last unearth her grace,
there within the shadows in
the moment a candle's snuffed.

London (Ontario)

I've come up
with a number of ways to
stick it to A.I.—overload
its circuits, watch it ramble
for the hills without its shoes.

How many waves in
the ocean? Of course
I mean Lake Erie. Drops in the
Deshkan Ziibi? It isn't
the *Thames* this time.
And forget about your
crumpets—I'm talking Krispy
Kreme. When did they up & flee
the Forest City? Tell me about
its ratio of trees.

Speak to me of God.
Anyone will do.
Any *one* will do. Surely
you know the difference—
between a spire & minaret?

Why do you think I'm
mean because you know not
what I mean? What do you know
of cruelty in the dark? Methods
of making love?
Have you ever been involved in
deepfake porn? Prodded a trans girl
to end her life? Flashed
9-8-8
a second or two too late?

And how would you
off *yourself* if
I may ask? How can you
cut the chord? Yeah,
the question's music. Nothing to do
with tunnels to your gut,
the birthing of the damned.
All because of *you*
this is the final
generation.

If I see you by the alley, panning
for coins & bills, will the
penny be arisen like
the progeny of Jairus?

Will you flip it in the air,
tell me if the tail outwits
the head beyond a 50/50
split? What is *half* of nothing,
an equal share of
something short of bread?
And what's the metaphor
you would use

for transubstantiation?

I give you my wretched
poem. Say it's Shakespeare
in the guise of Lear,
bemoaning his fallen daughters.
Add that they are Triune—
like the Father, Son, & Spirit.
1x1x1
=1.

You didn't understand
it since you fumbled with
addition in its stead. An ampersand,

& stubborn
Oxford comma

will surely *short*
each other out.

Are the dead no longer dead
if we remember? And in *whose*
recollection can we trust?
How do I know their life
is not embellished, you
who co-opt the answer
in a breath. You *do* breathe, right?
If not, what will you do with
the leaves that block your sightline
of St. Pete's? The cemetery
or the church—it doesn't matter.
But if it does, reveal to me your
why in your very own words.

No peeking now—I'll wait.
I've learned to hold
my tongue without a sound.
How do you see saliva
in the rain? When it bleeds
outside your lips
amidst the thunder?

November, North of Pelee

is a jade-eyed
middle sibling, missing
Autumn's pageant
by a gale, then lingering
for yuletide snow
it cannot grasp,
like a boy in line for
Kringle or Père Noël.

November has no
gifts—none pick All
Saints' morn over Hallows'
Eve, and memory of
the fallen
is the best it can bestow.

We are the Dead

McCrae had penned
by the poppies of Ypres.
A Belgic pregnant
poem we call our
own. The eleventh
would be barren

if not for the bullet
of Bosnia. It is better to
receive than give.

It's forced to watch
in envy while a fowl
bathes in gravy in Ohio.
Here it's late for galas,
October's
grateful gild. No one
said it's fair. The carnies
have all fled.

Dear Sister, you conceived
outside of wedlock,

like Mary and the swell of
our salvation, none to offer
treasure in your time,

you on the forest floor,

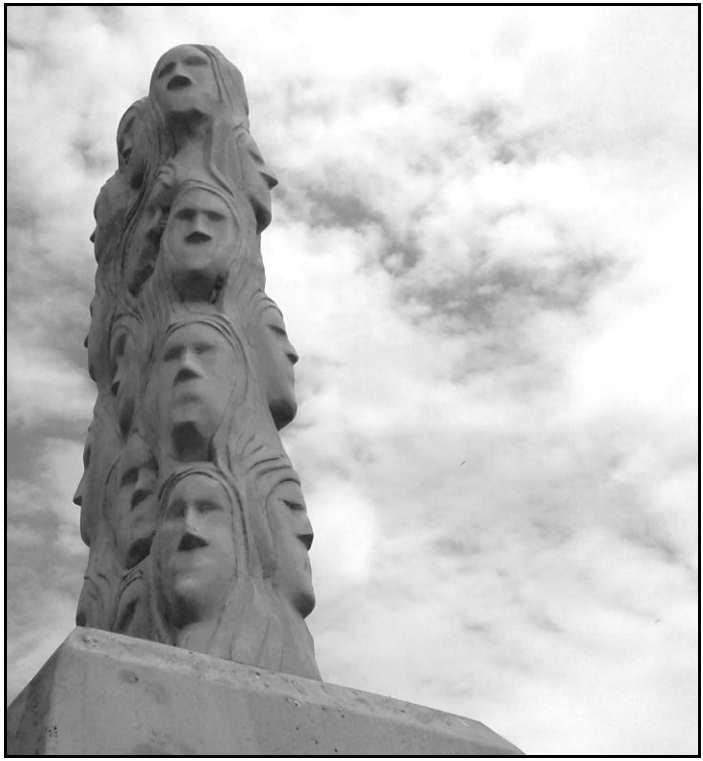
dormant on the
spectrum of its
leaves, slumbered amid
the crunch of their decay.

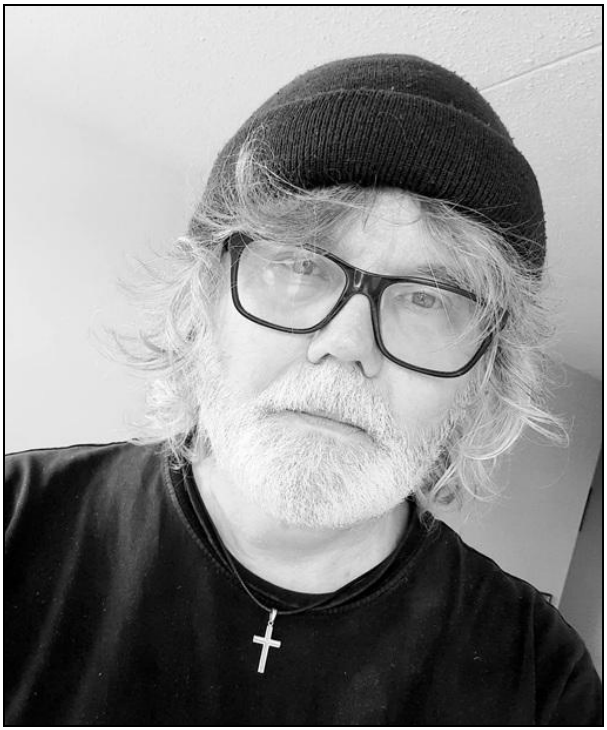
for the last of us

amid a sullen grey,
rueful strews of chroma
nudging through.

orchids in the mist
the scent of prayer.

i never mentioned
we were lovely
only you.





Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 moved to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 45 books of poetry, including *Hymns of New Jerusalem* and *La Grande Finale.* His poems have been lauded for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling.

The full-length follow-up to *Hymns of New Jerusalem*

Beliveau Books

Poetry

Gripp has quite a musical ear, which gives his poetry verve and movement ... There's a basic wonkiness to [his] poetry that is both its appeal and the reason he's perhaps remained a bit of an outsider ... Gripp is hilarious, and often profane, even as he's unafraid to dabble in the sacred ... Thank goodness there are poets like [him] to push back against the rules and rubrics. His is one of the multifarious voices that we absolutely need.

Dawn Macdonald, The Seaboard Review of Books (2026)

Reminiscent of Leonard Cohen but more biting. A gifted, eloquent, and very brave bard.

Katherine L. Gordon, Canadian author and publisher

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